

GEN. PHILLIPS

Taipei Riots Viewed as Blind For Seizing U.S. Secret Codes

Mob Had Special Equipment to Get
Through Steel Doors—Replacement
of Communications System Costly.

By BRIG. GEN. THOMAS R. PHILLIPS, U.S.A. (Ret.)
Military Analyst of the Post-Dispatch.

CPYRIGHT

WASHINGTON, May 29

THE RIOTS IN TAIPEI, Formosa, in which the United States embassy was broken into and sacked and the United States Information Agency building wrecked and nine Americans injured, is regarded more seriously in military circles than will be admitted publicly. The official line is that this was an emotional incident that will not disturb United States-Nationalist relations.

The reason that the riots are regarded so seriously is that some of the so-called mob were prepared with special equipment to get through the steel door into the code room of the embassy and to open safes.

The steel door resisted their efforts, so they cut through a six-inch brick wall into the code room, scattered top secret papers all over the compound and got away with secret material that will remain unidentified until the junk remaining has been sorted out.

United States Ambassador Karl Rankin made the understatement of the week when he said the destruction of the code room will mean "some readjustment" of American secret codes.

Involves Huge Task.

Actually the compromise of a code requires its replacement on worldwide basis before secret communication in the particular class of code can be renewed. Such changes can be made only by sending messengers with the new materials to all the places in the world where such codes were in use.

Furthermore, with the information and material that may have been obtained, an enemy power may be able to read top secret messages of the recent past from any of the embassies using the particular code.

This requires that the enemy power have tape recordings of United States radio transmissions. It is known that the Soviet Union and other powers make such tape recordings.

United States officials are certain that the riot was only a cover for the effort to get into the code room. They may be influenced in their thinking by the memory that the United States, during the last war, was successful in tapping into enemy radio rooms.

Police Slow to Act.

If this were not enough,

dence of the organized and purposeful nature of the riot, there is the failure of the Nationalist police and army to take prompt action to halt the crowds. Walter Briggs of the New York Herald Tribune reported, and this has been confirmed, that two armored cars with 37 mm. machine guns were drawn up within 75 yards of the embassy and three busses loaded with police were parked 40 yards farther away.

If these had been ordered into action, Briggs reported, that some Americans believe the mob of about 3000 could have been brought under control.

Actually it was more than four hours before adequate action was taken to bring the mobs under control.

Further evidence that the riots were planned was shown by the fact that a number of Americans received warnings from Chinese friends the day before and that the Seventh Fleet was alerted in advance for the possible evacuation of Americans.

About 10,000 Americans.

There are between 9000 and 10,000 Americans on Formosa at the present time, including dependents. The largest group is the Military Assistance Advisory Group of about 2200 officers and men, plus their dependents. Only 200 officers and men of this group, and their dependents are in Taipei, the rest being in the field with the units they instruct.

There are about 1400 Air Force officers and men stationed there to service the fighter squadrons that rotate from the Philippines and Okinawa to Formosan air bases for training.

Altogether there are more than 4000 Americans, plus their dependents, who are employed by the government for various purposes.

There are also a number of missionaries and business men.

Plans were already under way to reduce the military assistance group by about one-third beginning July 1. The group has been beefed up after the shelling of Quemoy Sept. 3, 1955, but before the evacuation of the Tachen Islands in January 1955, to extend training to larger units of the Nationalist army.

Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson was asked at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing yesterday whether we should continue large-scale aid to Formosa in view of the incidents.

Wilson was non-committal, saying: "I do not think I should take a public position on it so quick." In response to further questions by Senator J. William Fulbright (Dem., Arkansas): "I don't want to pour oil on the fire by making ill-considered statements."

When asked by Senator Bourke B. Hickenloper (Rep., Iowa), whether the military assistance program was in our own interest, he declared: "It is up to a point. It is not good if it produces great animosity. This incident highlights the need for taking a better look at the program."

Presumably the "better look," which might materially reduce the program, will depend upon what is learned about the origin of the obviously planned riot.

Informed circles in Washington believe that top level political rivalries on Formosa are principally to blame, but that elements that are plotting a coup to turn Formosa over to the Reds are also involved.

The internal political rivalries involve an attempt to depose Premier Yui and Foreign Minister George Yeh. The Cabinet did resign, but was reappointed by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.

The other aspect, the effort to drive a wedge between the Nationalist Chinese and the United States, which is the present effort of the Reds in their program of "peaceful liberation" of Formosa, involved the Nationalist Youth Organization.

This has about 37,000 members and is under the control of Chiang Kai-shek's son, Chiang Ching-kuo, who is also head of the secret police. The student rioters carried small flags with anti-American slogans and stickers of similar nature were slapped on American automobiles.

It was to restrain the student group from riots in other cities on the island that widespread martial law was clamped down when the Nationalist government finally took action.

Chiang Ching-kuo has been an object of distrust by Americans on Formosa for many years. He spent a great many years in Russia, and is credited to a Russian background. The fact that his youth

organization was the leader in riots further emphasizes American distrust of his motives.

Americans fear he will make a deal with the Red Chinese, accepting a high position in the People's Republic, and deliver Formosa to the Reds. A first step to make such a deal possible might be to encourage the latent anti-American sentiment on the island.

The Soviet and Red Chinese propaganda organs are making major efforts to take advantage of the riots. "Taipei riots mark hate of the United States in the East," the Soviet radio proclaimed.

It quotes the mayor of Manila as saying: "At present Americans are hated throughout Asia." Another commentary is: "United States soldiers' brutality." Another: "Liberation urge behind Taiwan (Formosa) outbreak."

And still another beamed to Japan, where the United States is having difficulty over the accidental killing of a Chinese woman by a soldier, declares that "Americans (are) contemptuous of other races."

Koreans are told in Korea that "American army bandits are continuously committing crimes in South Korea."

Both the Soviet and Red Chinese radios emphasize their point that the Americans "occupy" Formosa.

The incident shows the difficulty of the American position in the Orient. In the opinion of many experts, it calls for a re-valuation of the entire United States policy in the Far East, where the major part of our economic and military assistance is being spent.